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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the response of 80 sponsors of Indochinese refugees in Nebraska to a survey designed to explore their sponsorship experience. Problem solving areas for sponsors and refugees are named as: acculturation, emotional adjustments, communication, health, housing, transportation, employment, and legal, financial and consumer related issues. Information on the amount of time sponsors spent helping their families is included, the satisfactions and dissatisfactions of sponsors are discussed. Conclusions and recommendations for future sponsorship efforts are made at the report's end. Appendices include a sample questionnaire, a list of people who developed the questionnaire, and samples of support letters that were distributed with the questionnaire. (APM)

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SPONSORS OF NEBRASKA INDOCHINESE REFUGEES: MEETING THE CHALLENGES

JUNE, 1981

"THERE ARE NO STRANGERS, ONLY FRIENDS WE HAVEN'T MET."

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Certainly, I would also like to express my appreciation to the 80 sponsors who took their time to share with us the results of their experiences. Without their assistance this booklet could not have been prepared. This report is dedicated to all sponsors who have unselfishly given of their time and resources to help others in need.

William H. Meredith

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Sponsors of Indochinese refugees are a special group of people. To be a sponsor requires a person with a considerable amount of love, patience and the ability to give of one's self to another. It takes time as well, for the sponsor's job is measured in years, not weeks.

The Nebraska Indochinese Refugee Sponsor Needs Assessment was designed to look at the challenges faced by sponsors as well as how those challenges had been met. Satisfactions and dissatisfactions of sponsorship were also examined.

A questionnaire (Appendix I) was prepared by the Home Economics faculty involved with the grant and an advisory committee of community persons working with refugees (Appendix II). Questions in the survey instrument were categorized as follows: cultural changes, emotional adjustments, communication, health, housing, transportation, employment, legal, financial and consumer-related issues. Challenges/tasks and the resolution of them provided the framework for the largely open-ended design of the study. Names of 220 current sponsors were gathered from the files of Catholic Social Service-Omaha, Catholic Social Service of Grand Island, Lutheran Family and Social Services, and Church World Service.

The questionnaire was mailed to the sponsors whose names had been obtained. Included with the questionnaire was a letter from the Project Director explaining the purpose of the project (Appendix III). Letters of support from Charlotte Leas of Catholic Social Service (Appendix IVa), Mary Frazier of Church World Service (Appendix IVb), and Keith Schmode of Lutheran Family and Social Service (Appendix IVc) were included in the appropriate envelopes.

Completed surveys were returned by 80 sponsors for a return rate of 36%. The length of the questionnaire and the time required to fill it out may have lowered the return rate. The nature of the survey instrument necessitated a descriptive analysis of the data rather than a statistical analysis.

Changing Cultures

Refugee adaptation to American culture was mentioned as a struggle by many sponsors. The refugees came from cultural backgrounds totally different from that of Americans. Changing cultures can be viewed from two perspectives -- adapting to the new culture and maintaining the old one. Both are seen as being important for positive mental health. Sponsors helped the refugee adapt by sharing activities with them, showing them how American holidays are celebrated, and from many, many discussions. Television viewing was the most often mentioned mechanism for learning about the new culture. Many sponsors marveled at the relative ease with which the children acculturated.

Problems relating to a changing culture that required sponsor assistance included understanding American technology, the monetary system, American customs, coping with the weather, and dissillusionment with the American success dream.

Some sponsors apparently felt that maintaining the culture of origin was not important. They felt that preserving aspects of the past culture held the refugee back in an 'unreal world' and caused them to be reluctant to accept American ways. One sponsor was distressed that the refugees had no appreciation for 'the arts'. The sponsor stated that 'their' music was too available to them on cassettes. It would be interesting to see how many Americans would be willing to give up all of their customs if they suddenly became refugees in China.

Another problem with maintaining the refugee's culture mentioned by sponsors was their own unfamiliarity with the refugee's culture. The isolation of some refugees and the splitting of their families by resettlement were also mentioned.

For purposes of identity, security and self-concept it is important to maintain important links with the past for new Americans. The majority of sponsors saw this need. Some assisted by showing interest in the refugee's culture by asking questions, learning their customs, and sharing in their holiday celebrations and trying their foods. One sponsor wrote, "Every culture has valuable resources to share."

Other sponsors encouraged the continuation of native arts. These actions showed respect for the refugee and his background.

Rather than holding the refugee back, this acceptance helped them feel more comfortable learning American ways.

Refugees also maintained their culture by visiting with others from their respective ethnic groups. In Omaha and Lincoln this was relatively easy. For others, getting together with refugees in the neighboring towns was important as was telephoning relatives in far away places. Shopping in Oriental food stores, playing native music and celebrating ethnic holidays were other important ways of maintaining their culture.

Religion is another top often closely tied to culture. While some refugees were Catholic or Lutheran in their home countries, many were Buddhist. For those who were Buddhist, most sponsors "let them do their own thing" as one sponsor stated. One sponsor wrote, "One of our decisions before they came was that we would not lay our religion on them but let them come to us if they wished." In the middle were those who brought the refugees to Church for social reasons and to allow the Church members to feel involved. This middle group provided Christian materials, but only when asked. For a few sponsors a goal of their sponsorship was to convert the refugee to their particular religious orientation. These sponsors indicated they would be disappointed if the refugee did not become Christian. Most sponsors stated that the refugee family they were sponsoring did attend church. Some attended more to please the sponsor than for any other reason.

Freedom of choice would seem to be important concerning religion. Obviously most sponsors would not appreciate a new religion

being forced on them should they ever find themselves in a new country.

In general the sponsors saw the refugees as a group to be progressively working toward adapting to a new culture while maintaining the positive aspects of the old culture in their homes. A blending of American and ethnic cultures is occuring. However, the sponsors saw this as a long, slow process. Time and patience by both parties was required.

Emotional Adjustment

While changing cultures put much stress on the refugees and in turn on the sponsors, separation from extended family was seen as much more difficult. Many sponsors were amazed with the close ties found between family members and extended families. It is a closeness not often found here today. The conflict over changing roles between husbands and wives and parents and children were also often mentioned. Older people were seen as having the most difficult time adjusting. Some refugees had a general fear or anxiety, in part a result of their experiences with the war and their departure from their homeland. Difficulty sleeping and nightmares were mentioned as well as irrational fears.

Sponsors stated that this area was one of the most difficult areas for them. Lots of interpreting, explaining, trusting, caring, and loving were required with frequent sponsor visits necessary. Sponsors helped the refugee search for their relatives through the

Red Cross and the Immigration and Naturalization Service. They also helped them maintain ties with relatives in the home country. However, for many family and emotional problems, the sponsor could do little in terms of direct intervention. Family and refugee friends helped when possible. Sponsors stated a need for more ethnic counselors to assist with emotional and family problems.

Most sponsors felt that prejudice had not been a major problem for the refugees they were assisting. However, prejudice did exist. Discrimination in the employment setting either by other employees or by wage discrimination were most frequently mentioned. Other minority groups often were not cooperative with the refugee worker and in some cases actively harrassed them. Refugees were critized as being "too industrious". Other Americans said they were 'communists' and not 'real Americans'. Sometimes they were called names when they broke one of the many informal, unwritten rules like standing in line. Other prejudice was related to language problems. In addition, some landlords would not respond to refugee problems.

Sponsors were able to assist refugees by first accepting them themselves and treating them as persons of value. Sponsors also mentioned that they provided education concerning customs for the refugee. They contacted employers and landlords and acted as advocates. Advocacy for the refugee was seen as a major role by sponsors. In addition sponsors were able to provide increased understanding of refugees to others and help eliminate myths. Some sponsors accomplished this by giving regular progress reports

to churches and community groups.

Other aspects of prejudice were also found. Some sponsors reproted ill will against themselves for bringing the refugees here ("Why don't they stay over there?") Discrimination between ethnic groups and among various factions of Vietnamese were reported as being equally difficult problems.

Problems with child care were not seen as significant by most sponsors. Either mothers stayed home with their children or the extended family provided assistance. Occasionally sponsors took care of the refugee children while the parents attended ESL classes.

Employment

Employment and employment-related areas were major challenges, if not the most difficult, faced by sponsors. The non-availability of jobs, too few jobs, jobs inappropriate to the refugees previous work or abilities, layoffs, and low pay were but a few of the difficulties encountered. Job discrimination was reflected in employers' unwillingness to hire refugees and withdrawing jobs earlier promised. Transportation and language difficulties compounded employment problems, as did the urgency for finding employment immediately, and the unreliability of the interview process on job skills which took place in the camps prior to arrival. Achieving self-satisfaction through immediate employment and job support proved difficult because

of the need for acquiring language and other job-related skills first. The "how-to" and "where" of ascertaining resources for the development of such skills were challenges in themselves for many sponsors and communities. In addition, getting refugees to accept jobs offered and personality clashes added other dimensions.

The success in meeting this challenge for Nebraska refugee sponsors can be discribed by the number and variety of types of work for which the refugees have been hired. These have included employment in jobs such as custodian, housecleaner, laundry, butcher, carpenter, gardener or silk screen operator or in the following firms: a mobile home factory, plating company, waterbed company, furniture store, machine shop, tire company, lumber yard, concrete products company, hospitals, restaurants, grocery stores, and moving companies.

The strategies, techniques and personnel used in the resolution of the refugee employment problem were many and varied as with the other problem areas. Persons and agencies frequently offering assistance were sponsors themselves, refugees' relatives, Job Service, CETA, Adult Workers Employment and Senior Employment Services. The mode of operating took various formats such as employment committees formed by the sponsoring agency, sponsoring agencies acting as job brokers, and sponsoring agencies themselves providing minimum wage jobs. Newspaper want ads and the church network provided sources of information concerning available jobs.

Employment procedures frequently consisted of training for a specific job followed by placement in an entry level position. Some-

times, jobs were arranged prior to the arrival of the refugee, or shortly thereafter. Other times an extensive time lag took place before job placement was accomplished. Accepting jobs that many Americans would not consider resulted in employment for some refugees. In addition, some sponsors spent hours on a job initially with the refugees thus helping them meet the employment challenge.

The continuum of attitudes reflected by the sponsors concerning employment ranged from, "frustrating and time consuming" or "very difficult to find jobs" to "we helped them find jobs. They did well in this."

The many faceted aspects of this challenge were accurately represented in the following comments, "A tremendous problem, especially training between 3rd grade English and any job training programs. There are no longer even entry level jobs, and time to look is a real problem. ....Going to the places where they already hire refugees is best, but that has slowed down considerably. We need new markets."

Communication

One sponsor stated that "learning English is the cornerstone of successful resettling". Therefore, teaching English to the refugee families was seen as one of the major tasks of the sponsor. This challenge was met in many different ways. Sponsors in Omaha and Lincoln most often enrolled the new arrivals in organized

English as a Second Language programs. Few Omaha and Lincoln sponsors indicated that they themselves taught English to the refugees. Therefore, one problem that only urban sponsors faced was that of providing transportation for the refugee family to thier classes. On the other hand, most out-state sponsors stated that they had themselves provided a majority of the English training for the refugee. Church sponsoring groups often set up committees for that purpose.

Sponsors used many means to communicate such as sign language, bilingual dictionaries, and pictures. Telephone conference calls with refugees who had already learned English were also used. As in all areas, the children learned English very quickly and often acted as interpretors for the parents and sponsors. Some refugees could understand English better in written form than spoken. In those cases, most communication was written out. Many refugees speak French. Those sponsors who knew French were able to communicate in that way. Persistence was important: asking questions in many ways.

While sponsors used adaptive ways to communicate, it was seen as a major challenge. Not only did it impact upon the relationship between the sponsor and the refugee, but also upon employment and self-sufficiency in general. Problems mentioned aside from general communication difficulties were the greater difficulties adults have in learning a new language, availability of classes, overcrowding in classes, transportation, babysitting, limited government funding, fear of failure, and lack of interest by some refugees. A sponsor

from a rural area stated that learning English was by far the greatest frustration and challenge. Other sponsors wrote that communication problems create many misunderstandings.

Transportation

The refugee not knowing how to drive was a major transportation difficulty indicated by sponsors. This in combination with the lack of a drivers license and non-ownership of an automobile led to refugee dependency and created problems with getting to work, grocery shopping and English classes. The inability to speak English compounded this difficulty whether related to public transportation, car-pools, purchasing an automobile or automobile maintenance and upkeep. The non-availability of public transportation resulting from not being located on a bus line in the cities or the lack of volunteers to provide such a service categorized transportation as a very difficult problem for some sponsors. The time demands put upon some sponsors in providing transportation were rigorous.

Challenges related to transportation were met in numerous ways with most frequent responses including bicycles (donated, loaned, and purchased), public transportation, sponsor-provided (American, other refugees, and CSW), and finding low-cost vehicles. Ownership of vehicles resulted in a normal sequence of securing learners permits followed by the obtaining of a license. One sponsor indicated

that the refugee himself took the initiative on signing up and paying for driving lessons. The securing of an international license met this need for one refugee. The purchase of an automobile required time and was only accomplished after securing and maintaining a job with adequate income. Sponsors assisted with the financing of a car in a few instances. Living close to schools, work and shopping areas, and car-pools for employment, alleviated some transportation hardships. The use of public transportation was possible only after teaching routes, procedures, etc. when difficulties existed with English.

The transportation challenge was accurately described by one sponsor as "the need for a sense of freedom of movement". One way of meeting that challenge was described as follows: "The car is the key to independence.... is important for self-esteem. It enabled the refugee to visit family members elsewhere." Variation in preceptions of transportation problems by sponsors ranged from comments such as, "Refugees were slow to adjust and depended too much on family and sponsors" to "transportation was difficult but a good volunteer does well."

Housing, Furnishing and Equipment

The availability of and locating of adequate, low-cost housing in a convenient location provided a significant challenge for refugees sponsors in most Nebraska communities. The limited availability of

housing of appropriate sizes for larger families and the immediacy of the problem of providing housing resulted in one sponsoring agency renting from a realty company five months prior to the arrival of the refugee family. Locating housing which was within walking distance of schools, work, and shopping areas, and on bus lines as well as having housing close to sponsors due to language barriers was not easy to achieve.

Additionally, housing problems included poor conditions, convincing landlords to accept refugees -- particularly when unemployed -- non-availability of rental units which would accept children, prejudice, preparing housing for occupancy, lack of outdoor privacy in rental units, and locating permanent housing for buying. Differing cultural standards resulted in divergent expectations as to factors of size and crowding as well as house and yard upkeep and maintenance. Utilities, deposits, and co-signing of leases and agreements were other new dimensions for the refugee to meet in the search for housing.

Housing needs were met by involvement of church or community task forces obtaining interest free money, individual sponsors purchasing houses for rental to refugees, securing a semi-furnished apartment above grocery stores, and doubling up with other refugee families or sponsors. Additionally, government subsidized housing, the purchase of mobile homes by a company, exchange of labor services for payment of rent and the establishing of a sliding scale for rent in relation to income received were strategies employed to aid refugee families in securing housing.

In some instances sponsors paid the rent, almost exclusively in the initial months, and signed leases in their names to obtain housing. Apartments were arranged within some of the sponsor home as another alternative. Parish homes were used in some communities while larger dormitory structures were remodeled in others.

As in other areas of family living, housing presented little if any problem in some communities. In other communities it was farily difficult as evidenced by the comment that "Housing prejudice, particularly against large families, makes finding good housing very difficult. .....Increasing prejudice will be a continuing challenge." Generally, however, the housing challenge was met by "Sonsors securing housing and furnishing it with necessary items, paying on to two months rent, utilities, all deposits and co-signing the lease."

The securing of furnishings, appliances, cooking utensils, and dishes in good condition was another necessary step in completing the housing arrangements for the refugees. The lack of hook-ups for washers and dryers presented some difficulty in completing this phase. Lack of knowledge by the refugee in the use of the equipment, facination with electricity and fear of being hurt by appliances were areas where instruction and demonstrations were necessary.

Household furnishings and equipment were secured by purchasing from donated funds, surpluses, gifts or loans by sponsoring agency families. Frequently this procedure was coordinated by a committe and involved total community participation. Household showers were held in some communities while companies provided furnishings and

equipment in others. In some instances, excess donated items were sold at auction with the money used to purchase other needed items. Laundromats and used stores such as Goodwill, surplus stores, etc. were a frequently used community resource. Renting of major appliances such as refrigerators and ranges provided yet another means for providing the necessary equipment for housing the refugee.

Financial Management

The major financial management problems of the refugee as indicated by the sponsors included the lack of understanding of the banking system, the total economic system, and the budgeting process. Failure to understand the banking system ranged from a lack of confidence in banks to not knowing how to use checking accounts. Other financially related difficulties stemmed from not knowing the value of money or prices of consumer goods, the desire to buy luxeries rather than meet needs and spending everything with no concept of savings.

An underlying cause of many financial problems for the refugee was the lack of an adequate income inherent in under and unemployment commonly correlated with communication difficulties. Financial problems were compounded when materialistic values surfaced with the desire to obtain everything quickly. The varying amounts of assistance provided by agencies resulted in confusion and differing expectations when discussions among the refugees

took place. Difficulties in understanding billings and contracts presented yet another hardship in the financial management of the refugee.

Although financial management was a problem area for the majority of refugees, it was indicated as no problem by some sponsors. Comments validating this more positive viewpoint were, "They were excellent money managers. I should take lessons from them!" or "They had fairly well developed management skills." or "They managed well and bought only what was needed."

Varying methods and procedures were used in meeting challenges related to financial management, including crash courses in monetary values, playing games of making change, and use of the envelope method of budgeting. Likewise, numerous persons were involved in the process ranging from sponsors, tutors, bankers, relatives, friends, interpreters and refugees themselves. It was not uncommon to find that the older members became frustrated with the complicated process thus resulting in the relegation of such duties to an older child. The complexity of the process was evidenced in comments such as "Repeated sessions of check writing never helped", or it was "A long process."

Sponsor assistance encompassed such things as setting up budgets, opening checking and savings accounts, and establishing tax records. A committee of persons was frequently used for the monitoring of the financial management practices of the refugee family. Sponsors provided financial backing in varying amounts and lengths of time. Development of financial management skills by the

refugee was aptly described by one sponsor as "....a very big problem....takes a long time. Some only learn when finally allowed to run out of money (this is true even in the USA!) Close supervision in the first months is important. Teach the importance of paying on time....how credit works. With first pay check introduce to banking, etc. Take the time to take the refugee to pay the bills, don't do it for them!"

Consumer Buying - Food and Clothing

The American marketplace is complex for everyone; to the refugee who is accustomed to widely differing clothing styles, food products and the system of marketing, shopping is an overwhelming experience. Some sponsors indicated that assisting refugees in the development of consumer buying skills was not particularly difficult. With some assistance provided, a fairly high level of independence was quickly achieved. Another sponsor noted, however, that it was an area which was easily overlooked. In one instance it was noted that assistance was provided for at least a year and a half; in aother, it was a continuing process.

Lack of English presented an additional challenge in that the inability to read labels combined with the unfamiliarity of various types of products and brand names, resulted in complete bewilderment. In a marketplace of completely new products, the distinquishing of need and luxery items is essential, as is the

learning of what constitutes a "good buy", the monetary system, and the value of money. Preventing extravagant spending for unneeded items was a challenge for some sponsors. Resistance to buying and trying new products presented some difficulties. A cultural practice which resulted in differing role expectations included the head of household not allowing the wife to be involved with shopping.

Much assistance in this area was provided by other refugee families -- those who had been here for some time -- and sponsors. A committee of persons was frequently assigned to refugees to assist with the shopping experience. In some instances, it was the total family involved. Where language barriers existed, dictionaries, pictures, gestures, and symbols for such phrases as 'too much money', and 'not good for children', were employed to aid in communications.

Monthly charge accounts established by merchants at the request of sponsors, and providing assistance with transportation were additional strategies. A combination of the above procedures resulted in reducing the complexity of the American marketplace for the refugee and assisted in the development of consumer buying skills for purchasing products related to need and the value of the product.

Achievement of good consumer buying skills is a gradual, time-consuming process. A recommended sequence for such an accomplishment was aptly described by a sponsor as, "....Shop with the refugee for at least the first month. This is the time to teach and establish

good budgeting -- even with sponsor-donated money. Explain 'specials' and price comparisons."

The greatest challenge in relation to the consumer buying of food was the non-availability and the lack of information concerning the supply of Oriental food, particularly in areas other than Lincoln and Omaha. Finding large quantities of rice was difficult. The immediacy of having an adequate food supply available of items which would be liked by the refugee and would be similar to previous eating customs provided an educational challenge for sponsors. One comment indicated that the "education of sponsors to food needs was the largest challenge."

The lack of familiarity with American foods, resistance to American foods, and lack of information related to providing nutrious diets with foods in season while still maintaining appreciation for the refugee's cultural background were additional challenges. Dislike of foods from the WIC program, concern for lack of variety in the diet, and the purchase and cost of food were additional areas in which refugees needed assistance.

Developing good food consumer buying practices was generally accomplished by the allocation of a certain amount for food, initially provided by the sponsor, and from sponsors or committees assisting refugees with the shopping experience for the first few months. At the time of the refugees' arrival food needs were met through donations, food drives and food showers. Later, the use of food stamps, welfare and personal earnings of the refugees met such needs. In one case, a company provided the first months food supply. Other

activities and strategies used to meet food needs were gardening, direct purchasing from farmers, using mail order markets for Oriental supplies, requesting local food stores to stock specific desired items and establishing funds in the bank for food purchases. To aid in the gradual adjustment to new food customs, some refugees were served one meal per day by the sponsor that included some new foods as well as some familiar ones. Other refugees served as a valuable resource in meeting food needs.

Food needs of the refugees were described as "very simple" by one sponsor. The correct care, specifically as related to refrigeration of food, and nutritious diets presented areas of continued need for information. The cultural adjustment to foods of a new land is a slow and continuing process.

Sponsor responses indicated that the provision of clothing for the refugees was not a major problem. Clothing related challenges most frequently mentioned included such factors as the initial meeting the need, the amount of clothing for large numbers of people, unavailability of small enough sizes in appropriate styles, and lack of information concerning care, upkeep, and appropriateness to weather conditions. Finding mens' clothing small enough was a particular problem, but was met through the purchase of boys' sizes.

Preferences for the styles of clothing unique to their home culture and the unavailability of such styles presented yet another dimension in the resolution of clothing problems. Arrival with non-seasonal clothing, forgetting to wear shoes in cold weather and

being unaccustomed to wearing someone else's clothing were additional problems. Other refugees acted as role models and also provided some clothing.

Clothing, both new and used, was primarily provided by sponsors through donation of friends and sponsors, themselves. Additional strategies employed included instruction in the purchase of functional, seasonal clothing, construction and alterations, and care and upkeep of clothing. Refugees were introduced to American customs such as garage sales, discount stores, and used clothing stores in an attempt to encourage economy in clothing purchases. In some instances, merchants offered clothing at reduced prices. The use of committees and total community involvement including such services as good neighbor centers were also employed.

Information concerning the purchase of special types of clothing such as for employment was provided. In conclusion, the key clothing problem was provision of functional, proper fitting clothing acceptable to an Indochinese refugee accustomed to very different styles at a minimum of cost due to limited resources. Recommendations provided by sponsors useful in meeting this challenge included: "One new outfit was bought for each individual; this was supplemented by previously used clothing," and "Proper shoes and outerwear were best purchased by sponsor. A sewing machine is a must in a refugee's home."

Health

While refugee health problems were mentioned by nearly every sponsor, most sponsors felt they were able to meet these needs reasonably well.

By far the most common health problems were dental in nature Most sponsors mentioned dental problems as an area of concern. It appeared that Lincoln residents had the easiest time meeting this need because of the availability of services such as the Open Door Health Center and the University of Nebraska Dental College. One sponsor remarked that the lowest priced dentist in town was found.

Other health problems that were mentioned with some frequency were parasistes, TB, lice, scabies, cancer, eye problems, allergies, and pregnancies. Other medical needs were immunizations and check-ups.

Resources used to meet these needs included public health nurses, city-county health departments, medicaid, welfare, funds from Church World Service and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, group health insurance, the University of Nebraska Medical Center and Creighton, and church donations. While some doctors and dentists refused to care for refugee patients, many other, particularly in rural Nebraska, agreed to care for them at no charge until financing could be arranged. Others required sponsors to guarantee payment.

While most sponsors were able to meet the health needs of the refugees, several thought they needed more advanced information on how to deal with medical and dental problems. Several sponsors said

billing was a nightmare because it had to pass through the church system. Sponsors also mentioned that health problems were burdensome to handle because of the time spent waiting in doctors' offices. Cost was also mentioned as a great health care problem. Not all refugees had adequate personal resources or were qualified for public assistance. A few sponsors said the refugees were not getting the care they needed because of lack of money.

Legal Issues

According to sponsor perceptions, the majority of Nebraska's Indochinese refugees experienced limited, if any, legal problems. Those that surfaced resulted from cultural differences and would commonly occur for residents in a new country. Refugees were not accustomed to as many rules as in the United States such as the minimum age requirements for buying alcohol, driving a car, having chickens in the back yard in a town or city, etc. The most frequently mentioned legal issues included: the welfare system, alien registration, citizenship requirements, understanding taxes, licenses (automobile, dog, etc.), legal contracts, automobile financial liability requirements, drinking and driving, and automobile accidents.

Family related legal issues encompassed a lack of understanding and knowledge concerning age and licensing requirements for marriage. Applying for official change of name, reuniting of family

members, foster children, unaccompanied minors and guardianshi; constituted additional family related challenges. Securing a court order and locating an available orphanage willing to accept an unaccompanied minor resulted in the aimiable resolution of one perplexing situation.

Numerous persons and agencies assisted refugees in the resolution of legal problems. Sponsors, pastors, and friends were primary in securing necessary legal assistance. Attorneys, who were friends or members of the church, if church sponsored, were chief among the resources employed. Referral to appropriate agencies such as Catholic Social Services, LFSS, National Immigration Service, and Congressmen or Representatives of appropriate districts was a strategy used to resolve legal issues.

Legal aid was a frequently mentioned source of assistance. Finally, the information provided to refugees in temporary camps prior to arrival in the U.S. on such topics as taxes, citizenship and social security acquainted refugees with some legal related issues.

Time Commitments

New refugee sponsors never knew what to expect, but few had any idea of the amount of time sponsoring an Indochinese family would take. Words like 'enormous', 'tremendous', and 'countless hours' were often used. One sponsor stated, "Time is almost more

difficult to find than the material support." Another worte, "Never enough of this." It takes a great deal of time to adequately meet the needs that have been outlined to this point. For this reason, sponsor burnout was a real problem.

Initially the amount of time required was very great and continued at high levels for six months to one year. While many sponsorships are groups, one common complaint was that "large groups of initial sponsors usually dwindle to a few who are quickly overburdened."

However, where all group members did stay involved, little burden was felt. Such groups usually worked on the principle of division of responsibilities and coordinated efforts. Dedicated, reliable and generous people were required. In one situation, the sponsor took a one-month leave of absence from work after the refugee family arrived.

Disappointments and Satisfactions with Sponsorship

Many sponsors listed no disappointments with their sponsorship and others said the satisfactions greatly outweighed the problems. In response to the question, "Overall, how would you rate your sponsorship experience?", thirty-nine percent marked 'excellent', 44% 'good', 11% 'satisfactory' and three percent 'poor'. Sponsors in out-state Nebraska saw sponsorship in a more positive light. Fifty-six percent of the out-state sponsors reported their sponsor-

ship experience as 'excellent' while 31% in both Lincoln and Omaha gave the same rating. A possible reason for this greater satisfaction was the increased contacts sponsors in a small town had with the refugee. In the cities, the sponsor arranged for ESL classes and, possibly, a variety of social services, to help the refugee. In the small community sponsors did most everything and may have felt a greater sense of accomplishment and pride.

The greatest disappointment sponsors had concerned secondary migrated refugees. While this was also mentioned by Omaha and Lincoln sponsors, it was quite a prevalent concern among out-state sponsors. Refugees often left communities where they were the only such family in order to join other family members. Several sponsors mentioned that the elders of the extended family in some distant state had called the family together. The sponsors disliked seeing the family for whom they had expended so much time and effort leave. Several sponsors mentioned that they wished they had earlier understood the strong need for family that exists in Indochinese cultures.

Another group of frequently mentioned disappointments with sponsorship had nothing to do with the refugees, but rather Americans working with them. Some typical comments were, "Many people wanted to help at first, but when they were needed they were too busy", "The unreliability of others in the sponsorship groups was our greatest disappointment", or "The prejudice in Christian congregations". Another sponsor said, "My greatest disappointment was the lack of understanding on the part of Americans who thought that since the refugees had come here they should adopt our customs and do every-

thing the American way and also expecting them to do things we would not do like walk a mile to the store with three preschool children." Sponsors were also disturbed that some Americans refused to recognize that the refugees had fought for and supported the Americans in the war; they had not killed the sons of America. The refugees and the United States had a common enemy. Some sponsors were also concerned about the lack of support they had received from social service agencies and other types of agencies such as Job Service and CETA. Some sponsors felt such agencies favored other minorities.

Some sponsors were also disappointed in themselves. The job was more complex than they had thought. Several commented that they had not been able to give enough time. Others felt that had not been properly prepared.

There were some individual disappointments with specific refugees. Some refugees were seen as being too willing to be on welfare. Others were too materialistic; some remained too dependent. As with any American group, there are great variations between individuals within the refugee groups.

The most often mentioned satisfaction was that of seeing the refugee gaining independence. Friendship was also listed frequently. As one sponsor stated, "Watching four young persons grow up and become happy, well-adjusted, useful persons has been our continuing satisfaction." Another sponsor wrote, "I went into this sponsorship cold. I came out with warmth from 'my families' love and their sharing of their culture." A third sponsor mentioned that, "They made us more gentle, more aware of people and their needs....they

have changed our lives."

Religion also played a role in the satisfaction of some sponsors. One wrote that hearing a refugee say, "I want to be a Christian; your sponsorship has shown me that God is love", made the sponsorship all worthwhile. Another stated, "Doing the Lord's work -- knowing the family truly appreciates our help" made sponsorship worthwhile.

While some of the greatest dissatisfactions of sponsorship were with Americans who were enthusiastic to help before the work started, some sponsors also mentioned the working together of Americans as their greatest reward. Writes one sponsor, "The sharing goes both directions. Selfishly speaking, what its done for several of the sponsors is amazing." Another sponsor from rural Nebraska wrote that a satisfaction was, "So many people joining hands to help them -- we gained so much as a community." A third reported, "Seeing the church congregation respond wholeheartedly" was satisfying.

Other satisfactions were learning about new cultures, seeing fear replaced by hope, gratitude and appreciation shown by the refugees, and seeing their close family structure, "Something lost in the United States many years ago". "An appreciation for things I had taken for granted (freedom, home)", was mentioned by one sponsor.

CONCLUSION

As can be seen, sponsors of Indochinese refugees face many challenges and tasks in successfully completing their commitment. Sponsors serve many roles. They are job brokers, employment counselors, and English teachers. In addition, they teach many other topics in their classroom of life. Sponsors instruct on how to buy a house or a car, how to use household equipment and prepare American type food. They help guide the refugee through the maze of written laws and unwritten American customs. Sponsors also serve in the role of taxi-driver and sometimes babysitter. But most of all, the sponsor is friend - someone to trust and someone on whom to rely. A sponsor is someone that the refugee can share the good times and the bad.

The Nebraska Indochinese Refugee Sponsor Needs Assessment asked sponsors how they were getting along, what there needs were and how they solved them.

Sponsorship was an unknown experience element for most sponsors. It took more time and presented more challenges than the sponsors had ever imagined. However, as the report indicates, most sponsors met the challenges, and met them with ingenious solutions that were often unique for each situation. Many sponsors showed great flexibility and patience in dealing with situations with which they had no previous knowledge or experience.

While sponsorship was not seen as being easy, the rewards appeared to be commensurate with the work. Most sponsors reported

high levels of satisfaction and pride for what they and their refugee families had accomplished. Sponsors changed as people -- they felt better about themselves and who they were. And in many cases, they had gained additional friends -- friends who would never forget the sacrifices the sponsor had made in helping them adjust to a strange land.

Recommendations

Comments concerning recommendations and suggestions for the future covered a wide range. Many of the suggestions given are currently in use. A number of sponsors, however, did mention the need for sponsorship classes for first-time sponsors. Many sponsors felt that such training classes would make for better placements. They would help the new sponsor know better what to anticipate. Such a meeting would also detail for the sponsors information on medical help, transportation, employment, housing, social programs, and available ESL classes. As there are too few people working full-time for refugees on a paid basis, experienced sponsors could possibly be recruited to lead the classes. They would share their experiences and provide moral support to the prospective sponsor.

In addition, it was suggested that a network of sponsors helping sponsors be organized. Sponsors might experience less 'burnout' if they could feel a part of a community of sponsors helping each other. The group could be organized as an informal support system with occasional formal meetings. Another suggestion was for increased

media publicity about the refugee's positive qualities and about sponsor experiences.

Appendix I

FAMILIES IN TRANSITION: HELPING INDOCHINESE REFUGEES

SPONSOR NEEDS ASSESSMENT

1. Are you currently sponsoring a refugee household or person(s)? Yes 1 No 2

2. If yes, what type of sponsorship is this?
1 Individual-American 2 Individual-Indochinese 3 Church 4 Community Group

3. Have you previously sponsored a refugee household or person(s)? Yes 1 No 2

4. If yes, what type of sponsorship was this?
1 Individual-American 2 Individual-Indochinese 3 Church 4 Community Group

Every Indochinese family faces challenges in adjusting to a new country. Please identify the challenges in your sponsorship and state how they were met. If the challenge still exists, please indicate so.

Challenges/Tasks	How were these challenges/tasks met? (agencies, sponsor, resources, strategies)
5. Housing:	6.
7. Food:	8.
9. Household Equipment:	10.
11. Health:	12.

13. Clothing:	14.
15. Learning English:	16.
17. Employment:	18.
19. Shopping:	20.
21. Money Management:	22.
23. Prejudice and Discrimination:	24.
25. Family and Emotional Adjustment:	26.
27. Adapting to American Culture:	28.
29. Maintaining Culture of Homeland:	30.

31. Transportation:	32.
33. Child Care:	34.
35. Other:	36.
37. Other:	38.

What challenges, if any, did you experience in assisting the Indochinese refugees you sponsored?

Challenge	How were these challenges met? (agencies, resources, strategies)
39. Time Commitment:	40.
41. Interpretors:	42.
43. Communication:	44.

45. Religion:	46.
47. Customs:	48.
49. Legal Issues:	50.
51. Other:	52.
53. Other:	54.

55. To what degree do you think the refugees have developed independence in the United States?
1 Minimal 2 Some 3 Much 4 Complete

56. How long has the refugee family/individual you are sponsoring or have sponsored lived in the United States? _____

57. To what degree is/was the VOLAG (Voluntary Agency) helpful in your refugee resettlement?
1 None 2 Some 3 Much

58. What else could the VOLAG have done to assist you?

59. What have been the greatest disappointments with your sponsorship role?

60. What have been the greatest satisfactions with your sponsorship role?

61. Overall, how would you rate your sponsorship experience?
1 Excellent 2 Good 3 Satisfactory 4 Poor

62. What guidelines or recommendations would you make for future sponsors?

63. What suggestions would you have for finding additional sponsors?

	Yes	No
If you would like a summary of the results of this survey, please indicate by returning the enclosed label with your name and address.	1	2

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix II

PERSONS INVOLVED IN DEVELOPING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Bill Meredith, Projector Director, Dept. of Human Development and the Family, UNL

Dr. Sheran Cramer, Dept. of Education and Family Resources, UNL

Harriet Kohn, Dept. of Human Nutrition and Extension Service, UNL

Dr. Hazel Fox, Dept. of Human Nutrition, UNL

Dr. Leon Rottmann, Dept. of Human Development and the Family, and Extension Service, UNL

Thelma Thompson, Dept. of Textiles, Clothing and Design, UNL

Dr. Sunny Andrews, School of Social Work, UNO

Dr. Ann Coyne, School of Social Work, UNO

Keith Schmode, Lutheran Family and Social Service, Omaha

Charlotte Leas, Catholic Social Service, Omaha

Mary Frazier, Church World Service, Lincoln

Hai Nguyen, Lutheran Family and Social Service, Omaha

Tom Scherer, State Dept. of Education, Lincoln

Chris Chambers, Indochinese American Association, Omaha

Appendix III

university of nebraska at omaha

College of Home Economics
Omaha Division 402/554-2449

Omaha, Nebraska 68182

January 25, 1981

Dear Sponsor,

The University of Nebraska College of Home Economics is conducting a needs assessment of refugee sponsors in the State of Nebraska. Sponsors face many challenges while helping refugees adapt to a new land. We would like you to share the challenges faced by you and the refugees you sponsored. In addition, we are interested in knowing how these challenges were solved.

The Lutheran Family and Social Services, Catholic Social Services, and Church World Service are cooperating with this project. These agencies have had a role in developing the questionnaire.

We hope you will take time to fill out the questionnaire and mail it back in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you would like to see a summary of the results, place your name on the enclosed postcard and mail back separately from the survey. This will assure the confidentiality of your answers.

In addition, I want to inform you that the College will be sponsoring a conference entitled, "Families in Transition: Helping Indochinese Refugees" May 11-12, 1981, on the UNL East Campus. The conference will be for sponsors, agency personnel, and interested refugees. You will receive more information concerning this conference in March. Please mark this date on your calendar and make plans to attend.

Thank you for your time and help.

Sincerely,

Bill Meredith

Bill Meredith
Program Director

WHM/jf
enc.

Archdiocese of Omaha

Appendix IVa

United Catholic Social Services

2132 SOUTH 42nd STREET ■ OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68104 ■ (402) 558 3533

TO: SPONSORS OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES

FROM: Charlotte Leas, UCSS Program Co-ordinator

RE: Families in Transition Needs Assessment Survey.

The University of Nebraska Home Economics Department is presently doing a Needs Assessment Survey in conjunction with a grant that will culminate with a conference on Refugees to be held in the Spring of 1981.

We ask that you co-operate in any way that you can in filling out this survey. I realize that we have asked your assistance many times this year on various other census surveys.... It is necessary that we begin to look at patterns and trends in the Resettlement of Refugees.

We thank you for your past help and we realize that you as sponsors hold the key for sucessful understanding in the Resettlement of Refugees. You have worked very closely with the Refugee and can see and feel many needs that would never occur to those of us who are "desk bound"

If you note things on the survey that have been missed or that seem "off target" please let the interviewer know. Be open and frank. We are about the business of helping the new Refugees learn from the patterns of those who came before them.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE.

UCSS
People needing people
Turn to UCSS

ntral Office
2132 South 42nd Street
Omaha, NE 68105
(402) 558-3533

Martin de Porres Center
2417 Burdette Street
Omaha, NE 68111
(402) 341-4004

Gabriel's Center
4600 North 34th Avenue
Omaha, NE 68111
(402) 451-4264

Raphael's
4727 Hamilton Street
Omaha, NE 68132
(402) 551-9588

Shelter
P.O. Box 14510
Omaha, NE 68124
(402) 496-3300

James Manor
3118 North 60th Street
Omaha, NE 68104
(402) 551-4243

ARD of TRUSTEES
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ev. William L. Kelligar
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ry Bucchino
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r. Richard Davis
lma Hill
obert Matt
Barbara Markey
v. Mel Merwald
v. Emmett Meyer
omas A. Otepka
ary Louise Plaza
y Powers
aryanne Rouse

United Way Agency

Appendix IVb

CWS
REFUGEE NETWORK
OF NEBRASKA

Suite 303
215 Centennial Mall South
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508
(402) 476-3391
Mary Frazier, Coordinator

Denominations
Related to
Church World Service

American Baptist Church
Christian Church
Mennonites
Reformed Church in America
Church of the Brethren
The Episcopal Church
Seventh Day Adventists
American Friends Service Committee
Southern Baptist Convention
United Church of Christ
United Presbyterian Church
United Methodist Church

008.1

December 12, 1980

Dear Sponsors:

As one year ends and a new one begins I find it a good time to reflect on the things that have passed with the old year and the things I wish to accomplish in the coming days. Refugee sponsorship has been an active role that I was involved in during the year of 1980, as were many of you. As sponsors we experience many exciting and rewarding times as well as frustrating and depressing moments.

As refugee needs surface a number of grants become available to do research on the existing problems. The University of Nebraska College of Home Economics received such a grant. The grant is entitled, Families in Transition: A Home Economics Project to Help Indochinese Refugees. After conducting a needs assessment survey of indochinese households in Nebraska and a survey of sponsors the department will write a guidebook which will hopefully help Indochinese families as they strive to be a part of the American culture.

I have been involved with the Families in Transition and feel that the program can be of great worth to both the refugee and the sponsor. However, for the program to be successful a number of sponsors must take the time to fill out the survey. I would encourage you to take a few moments to do just that today.

Sponsors are in great demand as the refugee problem continues to grow in our world. By completing the survey you may lighten the frustrations of a new sponsor and enable them to have a successful sponsorship.

Sincerely,

Mary Frazier

Mary Frazier

Call the Nebraska Refugee Information and Resource Center toll-free 800-742-7740

Appendix IVc

Lutheran Family And Social Service Of Nebraska

120 SOUTH 24TH STREET • OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68102 • TELEPHONE (402) 342-7007

Dear Sponsor:

The Families in Transition project is a project designed to assist refugees and sponsors in the state of Nebraska through the use of a needs assessment tool. The project is administered through the College of Home Economics of the University of Nebraska Educational System.

Our agency has been closely associated with this project and we urge you to support it by completing the needs assessment questionaire. This information will be treated with the utmost professionalism and will give us information on sponsors and refugees that, until now, has been unobtainable.

God bless you for your sponsorship involvement and for your participation in this most worthwhile project.

Sincerely,

Curtis D. Anderson, ACSW
Co-Executive Director

Keith Schmode, ACSW
Regional Consultant LIRS

CD/KS:jes